Travels in the Protectorate

Agent in the west of the Protectorate was a person of very determined character who reacted strongly to any encroachment of what he considered to be his kingdom, while the distinguished administrator at that time in the Hadhramaut was equally strong minded and had acquisitive tendencies; so in order to prevent a major war between these two distinguished officers a line had to be drawn, and they had to be instructed to keep inside their boundaries.

Many years ago the Aulaki had burst out of their hilly fastnesses and spread east and west through the length and breadth of the Protectorate, until their influence ran right up to the Yemen borders and they held even Lahej to ransom, while away in the east the Quaiti Sultanate suffered from their depredations. In the earliest days of South-west Arabia before the Christian era, it is probable that the Aulakis were the most powerful race that that country had ever produced, but like many other great nations they gradually declined in influence and authority until today they have little but their barren hills and their pride, the latter bolstered up by nebulous claims to tribute from their neighbours, which they can no longer enforce. Their pride was their greatest asset and at the same time their worst enemy: in their powerful and prosperous days it had driven them forward and in the days of their weakness it had torn them apart until the great Aulaki Confederation had dissolved into a maze of blood feuds which had laid waste the land upon which they had come to depend, and thereby impoverished the people.

The old Sheikh who ruled the Sheikhdom had come into treaty relation with us in 1904 and he was still alive, but he was too old to manage the affairs of his country, and his youngest son Abdullah had been chosen as Regent to rule in his name. Abdullah was a pleasant person with none of the strong characteristics of his brothers and he had been selected by the family council and the tribal leaders for that very reason. His eldest brother was too die-hard to be acceptable to the family or the tribes; the bedouin brother was not interested, and his stout brother preferred to be the power behind the throne rather than the occupant of the throne itself. The

2: Hickinbotham G-4, 5 (ca. 1931-ca. 1957)
1958 MM1 Aden MM1

625
701 independent commanders in out-of-the-way places. In a serious crisis the Commandant of the Legion and the Military Assistant would be flown up to the nearest Post and the Commandant would take over the general control of the situation, sure in the knowledge that he could call on the Military Assistant, an experienced soldier, for advice at any time. Behind them both there was Hugh Boustead, capable of dealing with almost any situation single-handed, and behind him was Aden and the Royal Air Force ready and willing to help at any time. Everything was in good shape and I never had any qualms about our ability to deal with interlopers on the Saudi frontier.

648 In 1955 Her Majesty's Government formally declared the
[315] co-ordinates of the line south of which they would not tolerate the unrestricted movement of foreign subjects, and it was not long after this announcement was made to the Saudi Government that an American oil-survey party operating in two sections with an armed Saudi escort, trespassed in two separate places. They were located from the air and in no time the Military Assistant with an adequate escort from the Hadhrami Bedouin Legion, had moved by air and Land-Rover to intercept them. The error of their ways was pointed out to them and they withdrew promptly with their escort, leaving their expensive equipment behind in spite of being told they could take it with them. The escort had second thoughts and returned and were promptly taken into custody and disarmed without a shot being fired and later sent to Jedda by a civil Air Line. As far as I know the equipment is still in the desert; it certainly was in 1956 when I drove that way, and it was already showing very clearly the effects of sun, sand and the bedouin.

648 It was in the same year, 1955, that the Buraimi business in
669 Trucial Oman where the Sheikhdom of Abu Dhabi meets the
• [181] Sultanate of Muscat and Oman, upset King Saud. Stolen fruit is always so much sweeter than that which is got by legitimate means and in this case both *hasad* and *sharf* were involved—"jealousy" and "honour", those two curses of Arabia which have kept the peoples and the countries divided for generations and generations. The King showed his irritation with Great Britain by sending arms to the bedouin in the northern areas